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ABSTRACT

To increase parent involvement and meet the need for adult help in classrooms, a preschool director implemented a practicum in a church-owned, nondenominational preschool serving 250 children from an upper-middle-class community in the Northeast. The intervention offered a wide range of parent involvement activities, including the formation of a Parent Association and the recruiting, orienting, training, and evaluating of parent classroom assistants. A four-session training program for classroom volunteers covered school policies and procedures, classroom procedures and management, child development and curriculum, positive reinforcement and behavior management, and work attitudes and confidentiality. This program was followed by hands-on training in the classroom. Practicum evaluation data indicated that the program was successful in increasing parent participation. Twenty-one appendices contain related materials. (RH)

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Development of a Volunteer Parent Participation Program in the Pre-School

by

Cathy Powell

Cohort XXV

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A Practicum Report Presented to the National Master's Program for Child Care Administrators in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1988

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AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Feb 10, 1988
Date

Catherine Powell
Signature of Student

ABSTRACT

The Development of a Volunteer Parent Participation Program in the Pre-School. Powell, Cathy, 1988: Practicum Report, Nova University, Master's Program for Child Care Administrators. Descriptors: Preschool Education/Early Childhood Education/Child Development Centers/ Day Care Centers/Nursery Schools/ Parents/ Parent Participation/Parent Role/Family Involvement/Parent Influence/Volunteers/Volunteer Training/Program Development/Teacher Aides/Training

A need for more parent involvement in the pre-school and to increase adult/child ratios in the classroom led to the development of a well organized Parent Participation Program.

The writer designed a comprehensive program offering a wide range of parent involvement activities which included forming a Parent Association and recruiting, orienting, training and evaluating parent classroom assistants. Guidelines for involving parents and staff in the initial planning, and orienting the staff to accept volunteers in the classroom was essential to the success of the program. A four-session training program for classroom volunteers covering school policies and procedures; classroom procedures and management; child development and curriculum; positive reinforcement and behavior management; work attitudes and confidentiality; followed by hands-on training in the classroom was implemented and monitored by the writer. A step-by-step guide complete with a calendar plan for implementing the entire program from recruiting to organizing, training and evaluating is included. Sample letters to recruit parents and observation and evaluation tools are included.

Analysis of the evaluation data revealed the program was successful. Parent involvement was greater than expected and parents reported developing a sense of pride in working with the children as well as enjoyment in participating. The staff developed an accepting and appreciative attitude toward the volunteers and a substitute training program evolved from the classroom volunteer training program.

The author demonstrated parent participation can be successful in the pre-school setting for the benefit of the children, school, staff and the parents themselves.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

School and Community Setting

The school is a church owned, non-denominational pre-school serving 250 students from an upper middle class community in the Northeast. It is accredited by the National Adacemy of Early Childhood Programs in Washington, D.C. and is licensed and certified by the State Division of Youth and Family Services. The school demonstrates thru its accreditation that it has met the highest standards for both program and staff qualifications in the early childhood field and offers a program of the highest quality available to children. It is located in two facilities in the community to accommodate a growing enrollment. The educational building of the sponsoring church houses the largest number of students as well as the main office. Rented space in another local church houses the overflow classes and is considered the expansion site.

The children enrolled range in age from two and one-half years of age to five years of age and the majority come from two-parent homes where the father provides the main support of the family and the non-working mother is the principal caretaker of the children at home. They attend half-day sessions, two or three days per week, with a student/staff ratio of one certified teacher and one trained teacher assistant for a class of 10 students at the two-year old level, 14 students at the three year old level, and 16 students at the four year old level. The adult per child ratios are one adult for every five two year old children, one adult for every seven three year old children, and one adult for every eight four year old children.

The child oriented program offers curriculums that are based on child development and research on appropriate practices and approaches to learning at the pre-school level. Separate written curriculums for each age group are both age and developmentally appropriate and offer many child initiated, teacher supported, hands-on activities. The classroom environment is set up to be both enriching and inviting and

promotes self-discovery as well as providing many opportunities for the children to proceed at their own pace and in their own pattern to reach their maximum learning potential. Special attention is paid to the uniqueness and individuality of each child as they proceed through the wide variety of interesting learning activities available.

The staff consists of the writer, who serves as the Director, an Assistant Director, Office Manager/Secretary, Bookkeeper, Nursery School and K-8 Certified Teachers, State Certified Group Teachers and trained Teacher Assistants. The Director is responsible for the entire operation of the school which includes preparing the budget, purchasing all equipment and supplies, supervising the payroll and record keeping, interviewing, hiring, training, supervising and evaluating staff and providing in-service training to all employees. The Director also advertises and promotes the program, holds registration for incoming students, writes and implements developmentally appropriate curriculums and maintains communication with the parents and community. The Director also hosts parent open houses and conducts a parent education program. It is also the Director's responsibility to maintain state licensing requirements and national accreditation criteria for both staff and program qualifications.

The program requires a great deal of student-teacher interaction as the children and the teacher work together in the classroom. Every effort is made to provide as much individual attention to the child as time permits to provide the warm, caring, inter-personal relationships young children require in their early learning. It is the writer's responsibility, as Director of the program, to provide for adequate adult supervision and interaction with the children and to seek new, innovative ways to increase the school's ability to facilitate learning and possibly increase the adult/child ratio in the classroom.

Chapter 2

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Definition

The problem to be solved in the practicum experience was two-fold. There was a lack of a well organized parent participation program in the school and there was a need for more adult help in the classrooms. The school did not have a well developed parent participation program that encouraged parents to become actively involved in the total school program and did not have sufficient funding for the hiring of any more staff.

The parent participation previously in existence consisted of an assortment of one time, short term involvements. Parents drove for field trips, provided snacks and party favors, helped with cooking projects, had parent-teacher conferences, attended an open house, attended father's day and attended an end of the year picnic. A large parent bulletin board was maintained for communication and a parent education discussion group was led by the Director. While all of the above mentioned activities came under the heading of parent participation, there was no process orientation for a long-term, meaningful involvement of the parents directed towards sharing of the child's educational process. There was only a very superficial involvement of parents in the classroom activities.

The second aspect of the problem concerned the need for more adult help in the classrooms and with the overall program. The curriculum is based on a child oriented, activity approach which requires adult support to enable the children to freely choose the activities available to them. While the class size and teacher ratios are consistent with National and State criteria, the teachers were continually requesting more adult help in their classrooms to enable them to provide more individualized instruction and interaction with the children.

Evidence

The evidence to support the existence of this two-fold problem were results of parent questionnaires sent home at the end of the previous school year and a review of the minutes of staff meetings, staff mid-year goal setting conferences and end of the year staff evaluations citing teacher requests for more classroom help from the previous school year.

A sample of the parent survey found in (Appendix A: 48) and results of the survey found in (Appendix B: 50) showed a strong desire on the majority of the parents to become more involved with the school in a more meaningful way. In a survey of 250 parents of which two hundred responses were received, most replied that they strongly agreed that it would be beneficial to their child to have direct parental involvement at school, that the school would benefit from increased parental participation and that there was not enough opportunity to become directly involved if they choose to do so. All expressed a willingness to participate in some capacity and felt there should be more encouragement to do so.

Evidence of the need for more adult help in the classrooms was found in a review of staff meeting minutes from the previous year which revealed in eight out of ten meetings, teachers raised the question of how more adult help could be made available in the classrooms. During these discussions teachers cited the need for more adult help to facilitate more individualized instruction with the children. Minutes of the staff meetings at the expansion building cited repeated requests for additional staff to help in the learning centers. Discussions also centered around a better system for field trip drivers.

A review of the staff/director goal setting conferences at the beginning of the previous year revealed every teacher had listed spending more individual time with the children as one of their top three goals for their classes. At the end of the year evaluation session when goals were reviewed, every teacher felt they had not adequately met that goal and cited lack of enough adult help in the classroom as one of the reasons.

Additional data to support the need for more adult help in the classroom was found in the director's notes on classroom observations. Each class was observed once a month during the nine month school year and on every observation checklist notations regarding a need for more adult support of on-going activities were recorded. The director's observations in the classroom revealed teachers were spending time on set-up, clean-up and paper work that could be done by volunteers which would allow more teacher time with the children. The final report from the director on classroom evaluations included a recommendation that a way be found to provide more adult help with set-up, clean-up, science projects, story time, records, table and group games in the coming year.

Additional documentation stating the need for well-developed parent participation programs was found in correspondence from the State Licensing Department. Copies of the state letter to parents citing the need for pre-schools to offer parent participation programs is found in (Appendix C: 52). A letter from the Governor's Child Care Advisory Council highlighting a summary of the new child-care plan for the state included a section on parent participation, a copy of which is found in (Appendix D: 55). Page 117 of the Manual of Standards for child-care centers from the state, found in (Appendix E: 58) also recommended using parent volunteers.

Analysis of Causes

It was determined that the problem of not enough parent participation and not enough adult help in the classrooms could be solved by a well organized plan to recruit, train, implement and evaluate a volunteer parent participation program in the classrooms and the entire school program. This had not been done in the past.

The reason additional adult help had not been assigned to the classrooms was because the budget did not allow for the hiring of any more staff. A discussion with the writer and other pre-school directors revealed this to be a common problem that could be solved by using classroom volunteers. A review of the research also indicated a well-developed parent participation program of trained volunteers could solve the problem of raising adult/child ratios in the classroom.

The ideal was to have a well planned multi-option parent participation program that allowed parents to choose from many levels of involvement in interest areas and school activities. Parents would be enthusiastically recruited, trained and made to be a valuable part of the school program. The staff would demonstrate an openness to the parent program and would welcome the parents into their classrooms as part of an educational team. Using well-trained parent volunteers as classroom aides would free the teacher to spend more time with each child and the child's learning would be enhanced by seeing the parents and teachers working together for their education. This supportive atmosphere would enable the children to feel more confident about their learning as they see the two most important parts of their life, home and school, pulling together to help them reach their full potential. In this atmosphere of team work, teachers could help parents understand the needs of the children and help them focus on the development of a total child.

Relationship to the Literature

A review of the research showed the reason parent participation hadn't been more successful and the parents felt they hadn't been given enough opportunity to become involved in the school, was because a well-planned parent participation program had not been carefully thought out and developed. Parents were not properly recruited, trained or utilized in ways that would be mutually beneficial to their children, the school and themselves. There was not enough commitment of time on the part of the director to research, plan and implement a successful parent participation program nor was there a concerted effort on the part of the teachers to encourage the parents to become more actively involved. There was no provision for truly meaningful experiences for the parents to feel a part of the program. Without this encouragement, the parents never developed a sense of belonging or commitment that comes with a high level of involvement. Because parents had indicated a desire to become more involved and wanted to make a contribution on behalf of their children, they needed to be given specific activities and tasks which both contributed to the child and the school and was rewarding to them as well.

A review of the literature showed that parent involvement in schools was being encouraged, if not mandated, all across the country. Parents are considered vital to the positive growth and development of their children and it is recognized that parent involvement programs help the child, the school and the parent. The research shows "children of involved parents do better in school, have fewer behavior problems and are more goal-directed in their learning, "McDonald (1987:12)". Parents provide continuity between home and school and if a strong bridge between home and school can be built, parents can become more aware of their child's needs as they learn about child development. The school and staff can learn more about the children and their parent's concerns and can respond better from the close associations parent involvement programs foster. Parents gain self-confidence and feel less isolated and insecure about their parenting skills when they are involved in parent participation programs.

The literature points again and again to the need for parent involvement in any good educational program as parents are considered the key educators of their children. Parents need to be encouraged to make the child care services part of their lives, so they are not detached from the school, the staff, or what happens to their children at the school. "Parents can make a significant difference in their children's education and with our assistance will be able to join teachers and schools in a productive partnership". Morrison (1984:442).

Based on the readings on parent involvement programs, the writer learned that staff and parents must comprise a team to work together toward the goal of child development. It is the responsibility of the director of the early childhood program to explore innovative ways to promote and enhance the parent's role in a team approach to the child's education as involved parents can greatly enhance the quality of their child's education. The literature warns that successful parent involvement programs are hard work and require good organizational skills. The key to success is the ability of the organizer to actively recruit, train and organize the volunteers. The interests and skills of the volunteers must be matched with meaningful and fulfilling areas of involvement. The staff must be oriented to the value of parent

participation so they will in turn value and show appreciation for the volunteers.

The Director of the parent participation program must be able to continually observe, evaluate and make necessary changes to insure the on-going success of the program.

Chapter 3

OBJECTIVES

Goals and Objectives

The goals of the practicum were to find a means to create an interest in, and to get direct parental involvement in, the entire pre-school program. The intention was to provide enough variety for every family to become involved in the parent participation program in some way according to their abilities, time schedules and interests.

The objectives projected realistic goals for attendance and participation considering the fact that this was a new program which would take time to develop and the fact that the practicum implementation period was only ten weeks.

The goals were concerned with providing benefits to the children, school and parents by having parents become more involved with the program and provide realistic projections for use of training and development of new skills and knowledge for parents.

The suggested parent involvement program relied heavily on using parent classroom volunteers to add more adult help in the classrooms which directly benefits the children and their parents. The projections on parent abilities and use of training to benefit the children was measured in realistic ways using a variety of observation and evaluation tools. It was expected that the following stated objectives would be met and would result in a well organized, well-developed parent participation program which would enhance the entire school program and provide benefits to the children, the staff, the school and the parents themselves.

The following goals were projected for this practicum:

1. Over a period of 10 weeks opportunities will be provided for parents to participate in classroom and program activities as volunteers in a parent participation program as measured by responses to letters from the parent association and director found in (Appendices F: 60 and G: 62).

2. During the 10 week implementation period 20% of the parents will participate in one or more of the steering committee suggested activities as measured by telephone responses to the committee chairpersons listed in the parent association letter found in(Appendix F: 60).

3. During the 10 week implementation period 20% of the parents will participate in the Parent Classroom Volunteer Program on special days or thru activities done at home as measured by responses to checklists on registration forms found in(Appendix G:62)/ parent attendance records found in(Appendix H: 65).

4. During the 10 week implementation period 10% of the parents will participate in the Parent Classroom Volunteer Program as classroom helpers as measured by the number of registration forms received found in (Appendix G:62and parent attendance records found in(Appendix H: 65)

5. During the 10 week implementation period, a training program for the Parent Classroom Volunteers will be provided which will increase their knowledge in school procedures and policies, child development, classroom skills and teaching strategies, behavior management and positive reinforcement techniques as measured by the author's evaluation and observation forms found in(Appendix I:67).

6. During the 10 week implementation period, Parent Classroom Volunteers will be observed using positive reinforcement and behavior management techniques with the children to increase their skills and positive behaviors as measured by the author's evaluation and observation forms found in(Appendix I:67)and staff evaluations of parent classroom volunteers found in(Appendix J: 69).

7. During the 10 week implementation period, parents will interact positively and will enjoy playing with the children and will gain confidence in helping them learn as measured by the author's observations found in(Appendix I:67), staff evaluations of parent classroom volunteers found in(Appendix J:69)and parent program evaluation surveys found in (Appendix K: 7J).

8. During the 10 week implementation period, parents will see the staff as a resource for learning about child development and child rearing

practices as measured by responses to the parent program evaluation survey found in (Appendix K: 71).

9. During the 10 week implementation period, parents will feel valued by the staff and will receive better responses to their concerns and positive feedback for their volunteer efforts as measured by parent evaluation survey found in (Appendix K: 71) and the staff survey form found (in Appendix L: 74).

Evaluation Methods

Evaluation methods used to measure the outcome of stated objectives consisted of letters to generate interest in and to recruit parents into the parent involvement program, activity-interest sheets and registration forms, attendance sheets, observation and evaluation forms and parent and staff surveys to measure the success of the program. With the exception of the letter to the parents from the parent association steering group, all measurement and evaluation forms were created and written by the author.

The measurement tools for objective number one, providing opportunities for parent involvement were letters sent to parents of students in the school. The parent steering group letter found in (Appendix F: 60) introduced the concept of the parent involvement program and cited four different areas of involvement for interested parents. The letter encouraged parents to contact the committee heads with suggestions and ideas and to volunteer to serve on one of the committees. The letter also announced the school director would be organizing a parent classroom volunteer program and that information would soon follow which is the letter to parents found in (Appendix G: 62) . This letter encouraged parents to sign up to be classroom helpers in two ways, as classroom workers and as outside classroom support parents. The letter included a list of all the different areas parents could become involved in and encouraged parents to check off their interests and turn the form into the school office. Responses to these letters in the form of phone calls to committee heads and registration forms submitted measured the levels of parent involvement stated in objective one, two, three and four. In addition, parent attendance sheets found in (Appendix H: 65) were used to

measure the actual time volunteers participate in classroom activities.

The measurement tools for the training program stated in objective number five which were offered to parents, are the author's observation form of parent volunteers working in the classroom found in (Appendix I: 67). The Director periodically observed and recorded observations on the performance of the parent volunteers working in the classrooms, and the staff evaluated the parent classroom volunteers at the end of the ten week implementation.

Measuring the effectiveness of the training program stated in objective six was done using the same observation and evaluation forms described in the preceeding paragraph.

Objective number seven was concerned with parent classroom volunteer interactions with the children and with the feelings of confidence the volunteers will develop as they work in the classroom. These objectives were measured using the observation and evaluation forms mentioned before in (Appendices I: 67 & J:69). A parent survey found in Appendix K:71) recorded the parent volunteers attitudes and expertise developed while participating in the program.

The eighth objective was concerned with parent attitude toward the staff and was measured by results of the parent survey found in (Appendix K: 71).Responses to the questions in this survey revealed the role the teaching staff played in the training of the parent volunteers. Positive attitudes toward the staff from the parents were demonstrated by the results of this survey as was the belief that parents see the staff as resources for learning about their children which will help them improve parenting skills.

The last objective, number nine, was concerned with how parents feel the staff views them and was measured by results of the parent survey in (Appendix K: 71) and the staff survey found in (Appendix L: 74). These surveys measured parent attitudes toward staff and staff attitudes toward parents and revealed the communication achieved between the two groups. By using a variety of evaluation tools for determining the performance of the parent classroom helpers and the overall success of the entire

parent involvement program, the author developed an unbiased, broad-based evaluation of the program and the participants.

Tabulating responses to letters and registration forms took place at the beginning of the program. Parent attendance sheets were used throughout the ten week implementation period to obtain a true picture of actual numbers of participants.

Observations of parent volunteers in the classrooms as well as observations of staff working with the volunteers were carried out by the director on a weekly basis as soon as parents begin working in the classrooms.

Evaluations of the parent volunteers by teachers took place at the end of the ten week implementation period. Parent and staff surveys were filled out at the end of the ten week period and results of all of these measurement tools were used to determine the success or failure of the program and whether it should continue, be modified or disbanded. The variety of evaluation tools created allowed an informed decision to be made based on the suggestions and responses of all participants in the program.

Chapter 4

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Information Collection

A search of available literature on the subject of parent involvement in Early Childhood education revealed strategies for the development of parent involvement programs. Information on developing the parent program, involving parents in the planning, recruiting parent volunteers, orientation and training of parent classroom helpers, preparing and involving the staff and evaluating the outcomes of the parent participation program were researched and are either incorporated into the strategy or were rejected for reasons which will be cited. In addition, interviews with other pre-school directors as well as contacts with colleagues who have strong parent programs already implemented, gave valuable insight into what will and will not work with parent volunteers. A sample of interview questions used is found in (Appendix M: 76). Discussions with the staff to explore their needs and opinions about the program were also taken into account. Staff involvement was a strong component of the strategy adopted, as the key to the success of the program depended to a large degree on the willingness of the staff to commit themselves to the parent participation program and the degree the staff valued the parent volunteers.

According to the body of research, the success of the strategy chosen was the degree to which the person chosen to implement the program could inspire, organize and lead the people involved to successfully meet the goals of the program. The parents must be enthusiastically recruited, valued and appreciated by the staff, properly oriented and trained for successful interactions with the children and must have their interests and abilities matched with activities that provide for many levels of involvement and must allow for the differences in levels of interest, ability to use training and work pace of the people involved. An assessment of the needs of the parents must be made for training and on-going evaluation of the program and to

continually offer new ways to keep parents interested in staying with the program. The parent participation program was a major undertaking and required a high degree of commitment in time and energy from the school director who implemented the program.

> Once an organization decides that volunteers are needed, then a host of managerial decisions must be made. Decisions must be made about the role of the volunteer in the organization, the recruitment, the training and evaluation procedures to be used, and the strategies needed to implement a volunteer program. These are only a few of the key decisions that an administrator must address when planning a volunteer program. It is understood that an administrator must believe in the value of the volunteer program, and he/she must be willing to make the needed commitment of resources and time to support such a program. Only with this level of commitment can a volunteer program return dividends to the organization. Nelson (1986:4)

As further stated, "One of the keys to the development of an effective parent involvement program is the absolute belief that it is an important, even critical undertaking, "Manburg, (1985: 9.)

In conclusion what has been surveyed in the literature suggests a "richness of materials, resources and creative energies for increasing our ability to work with parents more intimately, more positively and more responsively in the education and positive social-emotional learning of their children. Parent involvement is a new profession. Parent involvement is a new adventure." Honig, (1980: 427.)

Solution Strategy

Many strategies for parent involvement are offered in the literature and range from the very complex and comprehensive models of home visits where parent involvers teach parents in the home to become educators for their children, to costly training programs where involved parents become paid teacher assistants. In between these two models lie many different approaches to parent involvement. Some involved forced commitments of time from parents, some call for separate parent lounges in the center where frequent parent meetings

are held for the purposes of parent education, lending libraries for books and toys and staff/parent functions. Others call for large parent associations which elect school boards and determine policy and procedures for the program.

In deciding upon a strategy for parent involvement the concept of home visits was rejected for two reasons; cost for travel and substitutes and the time involved for the staff. The teaching staff works five full days per week and were not willing to perform home visitation during after-school hours. In order to free them to do home visits, a substitute would have to be hired and the staff gas mileage would need to be re-imbursed. Because the goal of the parent classroom volunteer program was to add more adult help in the class and to involve parents in the school program, sending teachers to the home instead of bringing parents into the classroom would defeat the purpose. Since the budget does not allow for the hiring of more staff to increase the adult/child ratios, the budget could not support the hiring of substitutes and reimbursement for travel expenses to the staff. Another "home-based" strategy rejected was the idea of equipping a van or mini bus to take pre-school to outlying areas. This would be far too costly for the current program budget and was not needed due to the suburban location of the school. Again, the goal was to bring the parents into the program, not to take the program to the parents.

The idea of requiring parents to serve a certain number of hours in some capacity was also rejected as a viable strategy. The program is private and is supported by tuition fees paid by parents. To require them to work in the program in addition seemed burdensome and unfair. Interviews with colleagues supported this position. Parents had indicated in the past, they were willing to help according to their own time schedules but did not want to enter into a parent-cooperative arrangement. There were other schools in the area using this system and parents had the opportunity to choose that style of pre-school if desired. In describing different ways to get parents to work on school projects Harmon (1987) shows how different programs set up parent work requirements including buy-out plans where parents can donate money instead of their time to the program. The author rejected this

approach for the purpose of the practicum experience due to the negative feelings it might instill in the parents. "Programs which attempt to 'force' parents as a condition of the acceptance of children to participate as regular observers, volunteers or workers in early childhood settings may run into some special difficulties." Honig (1979: 30). The author preferred to adopt a parent program of involvement based on free-will donations of parent time and support to capitalize on the positive attitudes parents had toward the program. It was preferred to have parents in the building who saw themselves making a valuable contribution to their child's education by choice rather than by command.

Another strategy of parent involvement rejected due to lack of space was the idea of having a parent lounge where staff and parents intermingle and where toy and lending libraries can be held as well as parent meetings. It was expected that parents and staff would have enough opportunities for interaction thru the classroom volunteer program. The school already had a lending library for parents and if parents wished to become involved in a toy lending library, this could be a project for the parent association to undertake rather than using staff time.

Parent's education meetings are also a strategy suggested in the literature and this was already being done in the program and therefore would not be addressed as part of the practicum problem.

The solution strategies arrived at were based on recommendations from the literature, interviews with colleagues with parent programs already in place and represent a structure that created activities that were varied, flexible and captured the energy and imagination of the parents. The strategy offered opportunities through the implementation for input from parents, staff and administration and allowed room for changes within the structure. In developing the solution strategy, the author determined using parent volunteers to enhance the preschool program had advantages that overcame the reasons why volunteers had not been used in the past in this program or were not being used in programs at other schools. These reasons are summed up "as concern about maintaining professional standards of confidentiality, directors

don't know how to recruit, train and supervise volunteers, and belief that it is better to meet the need for more personnel by hiring professionals". Connors, (1980: 41). The strategy offered a model for recruitment and training which overrode these concerns and allowed for the effective use of volunteers when budget considerations precluded the hiring of additional professional staff.

Implementation

The strategy outline found in (Appendix Q: 84) and the calendar plan for the 10 week implementation schedule found in (Appendix R:87) serve as flow charts for the parent participation program and each step will be explained here as it related to the research and adaptability to the school program. The role and responsibility of the director was to develop the parent participation program to involve the parent association in the planning of the program, to recruit, orient and train the parent volunteers and to train the staff to be open-minded and to appreciate the parent volunteers. The director assisted parents in identifying their roles in the program and kept communication lines open between parents and staff. The director developed a training program and served as trainer for the program with the help of the assistant director. The director managed the program and developed evaluation tools to assess the performance of the parent volunteers and the overall success of the program. The director and assistant director held conferences with the teachers and parent volunteers to assess their performance and to determine the need for changes in the program and to determine what, if any, follow-on would take place. The director also planned ways to reward the volunteers for their time and service to the school.

The first step in developing the parent participation program was getting the parents involved in the planning. The author encouraged the formation of a parent association at the end of the last school term to provide a group of parents to help begin the parent participation program. Prior to the ten week implementation period, the author contacted the group to discuss ways they could assist in the implementation of a parent program. The results of this meeting were the formation of a steering group and the election of building representatives. Committees were established to head parent involvement projects through -

out the year. Director support of parent committees, such as ordering book fair materials, Week of the Young Child materials, etc., was done at this time.

The second step of the strategy was to provide communication to the parents and staff. During the first week of the implementation period, a letter from the steering group outlining different ways parents could become involved was sent to all parents asking them to contact the various committees with suggestions and offers of help (Appendix F: 60). The committee chairman reported to the director that over 20% of the parents responded with offers to serve on various committees. The rationale for this strategy of getting parents involved at the beginning was found throughout the literature. "Parents should obviously be involved in making decisions regarding parent/volunteer opportunities, parent learning programs and other aspects of center life relating to parents. When parents aren't involved in vital roles in a child care program, the program should be examined and criticized, not the parents," Greenberg (1975: 73).

The director also sent a letter to the staff during the first week of the implementation period to announce the development of a parent participation program and to ask for the staff's open-minded support. (Appendix N: 78). This was followed by a staff meeting to review the parent meeting results, explore the use of parents in the classroom, to motivate the staff to want a parent participation program, to receive staff input on ways parents can be used in the classroom and to determine the staff's role in training of the volunteers. At this meeting, staff was asked to provide lists of all the activities both in and out of the classroom where help was needed. These ideas, combined with the authors ideas, and insights gained from the readings and experiences of other programs comprised the list of activities of parent volunteers on the letter and registration form sent to parents during the first week from the director (Appendix G: 62). The purpose of having the staff generate ideas was to help them see the value in having parent help. The staff was asked to put a time value on each activity suggested and to calculate the time saved if they are successful in having parents fulfill these duties. This helped them see the value of having parent helpers available to them. According to the literature, teachers are the key to

success with parent volunteers in the classroom. It was therefore crucial to orient the staff to see the value of a parent program and to want parent volunteers. "Teachers are the main link with parents. If they are open, supportive and positive in their interactions, they can be one of your parent program's primary assets. You should work hard to see that teachers present an image of openness to parents". Parent involvement: Some Considerations (1973:9).

"It must be pointed out that orientation of parents and teachers to the use of volunteers is as essential to the success of a volunteer program as the orientation of the volunteers themselves to their work". School Volunteers and Early Childhood, (1973: 10).

It was determined during the staff meeting discussions that the teachers would need to present an image of openness and sincere appreciation to the parents so the parent volunteers would feel their participation makes a difference. Teachers were encouraged to send thank you notes to parent volunteers, birthday and get well cards and to mention their classroom helpers both in and out of the classroom in their monthly newsletters.

According to the high-scope research, the teaching staff has to put out a real effort to reach parents and consider them as partners. The director recognized that the staff would need to be oriented to accept the differences in parents which would require a set of positive attitudes on the part of the teachers. The staff meeting at the beginning of the implementation period was devoted to discussing how to create a warm climate for volunteers and to help staff develop a sincere interest in making the program succeed. Letting the staff help plan the work the volunteers would do helped the staff see parent's input as valuable rather than bothersome. It was also important not to let staff expectations for volunteer work get too high which would exert pressure on the volunteers. The director led discussions on how volunteers must be invited into the program and sincere acceptance must be the prevailing atmosphere. Teachers were warned that if they have the attitude they can do a better job than parents and don't really trust or encourage parent participation in the classrooms, parents won't come back no matter how many welcome signs are on the door. Every staff

member was helped to realize the importance of being friendly and openly appreciative of parent helpers. In instructing the staff on helping to make the program a success, it was also important to encourage the staff to listen to the parents and accept their suggestions. While it was important to orient the staff to avoid some of the reasons why parent programs fail, such as parents not feeling wanted, valued or sincerely appreciated, feeling incompetent or threatened by teacher authority, it was also important to use staff meeting time to explore staff feelings about the program. According to the literature, when parents enter a parent participation program, they are not the only ones who suffer anxieties. Staff are also confronted with problems with having parents involved in the classroom. The most common are "feeling of discomfort at meeting parents, possible loss of group control, possible parental interference and the problem of coping with it, fear of criticism and lack of acceptance from parents and lack of tolerance for the problems and foibles of parents". Corrado (1975: 13). For all these reasons, the importance of open discussions with the staff and allowing staff input throughout the implementation period cannot be over stressed. Discussions of these possible feelings took place at each staff meeting throughout the implementation period.

The third step was recruitment of parent volunteers into the classrooms. In forming ideas for parent involvement, it was recognized that efforts to involve parents must be flexible and varied. Strategies in Coventry, England to encourage parents to feel welcome in the schools set up various types of individual and group activities and recognized that not all parents can come and stay. In the Nursery Annexes Program, Denny cites how genuine understanding prevailed and parents who could not participate in class were not made to feel guilty. In developing a long list of parent involvement activities both in and out of the classroom, the author addressed this very important first step in parent involvement. The parent involvement activities were varied enough to allow every parent to get involved in some way. If from the start, many ways of participating are offered the parent, and the invitation is always open, sooner or later most parents will join in. Greenberg (1975: 69).

Planning for recruitment was a must if enough parents were to be attracted to the classroom volunteer program to make it successful. The director sent a letter during the first week of the implementation period to all parents announcing the parent classroom volunteer portion of the parent participation program which included a listing of all the ways they could help both in and out of the classroom (Appendix G: 62). The letter stated the needs of the school, how the parents could fill those needs and the benefits for their children, for the school and for the parents. The long list of available activities was compiled from parent, staff and administration suggestions as well as ideas from the literature and other center directors. At the same time, posters were also put up around the buildings to generate interest in the classroom volunteer program. The director compiled lists of non-working parents for personal contacts to encourage involvement. Responses were tabulated and groups were processed into "in-classroom" volunteers and 'butside classroom" support volunteers. Calls were made to parents who did not respond inviting them to join the program.

The next step in the strategy was orientation of the classroom volunteers which began during the second week of the implementation period. The first orientation session was announced by letter to the parents who signed up to be volunteers in the classroom (Appendix O:80). The teachers were asked to respond to the parents who signed up for outside classroom support such as snow chains. Teachers were instructed to match the parent's interests and abilities with the list of available needs and to use them in easy activities first, moving on to more involved projects. They were instructed to encourage parents to start doing what they like best, then move into other areas of involvement. After a few weeks, if there were unfilled slots for needed jobs, teachers phoned mothers from the class who were non-involved and recruited them to do those activities from home. Teachers were asked to keep a record of parents who provided outside support for their classrooms as well as lists of activities involved.

The first orientation meeting was held during class time the third week of implementation and was planned to include informal discussions with the director and assistant director and the parent volunteers to

develop a mutual understanding about the parent program. The goals for the parent participation program as a whole were discussed, as well as the school's philosophy and goals for the children. Parent volunteers were asked to complete and turn in a training needs assesment form found in (Appendix P: 82) to help develop an on-going training program. It was important to understand the parent's needs and values to be able to work effectively with them. The purpose of the first meeting was to be as informal as possible so ideas could be exchanged in an open atmosphere and parents could develop enthusiasm and pleasure in becoming involved. The training and work schedules were announced so parents could plan their time. It was important to set the tone that the subsequent training sessions would be fun, interesting and worthwhile to the parents in order to keep their interest level high. Developing a positive attitude toward being a parent helper was enhanced by the director explaining how important it is and how much fun it is to watch children grow and be part of that miracle. The NAEYC training video "Celebrating Early Childhood" was shown and the director discussed the purpose of the practicum experience and the role of the director in developing and implementing the program. Coffee and dessert was available followed by an invitation to observe in any of the classrooms.

The next strategy was to develop a training program and to determine who would provide the training. According to the research, determining who would be the trainer can be as important as the training itself in determining the success of the program. "Charismatic leaders may be more responsible for significant program gains than a particular model, strategy or theory that informs delivery services. Styles of communication, caring for families and sharing developmental knowledge may be as important as particular plans, activities or theories endorsed." Honig,(1980: 449) "Parent involvement personnel are an enrichment program's catalysts, the indispensible ingredient. If they care about the development of mothers, fathers and their children and do things to show they care, and they have knowledge, skills and techniques, then a program can work." Honig (1979: 79).

The decision to use the director and assistant director as the trainers for the practicum was based on how closely they fit the descrip-

tion of characteristics good trainers must possess.

> In general, they are knowledgeable about the subject and have had field experience, they know the subject matter so they speak extemporaneously and do not read from a speech, they appear excited and interested in the topic, they use language that is understood by the trainees, they are organized and professional and demonstrate that they enjoy working with children and can establish rapport with the trainees. Riley (1984:39).

The research from Head Start training programs provided the best strategies for developing the training program for the practicum because guidelines for setting up and developing a training plan that easily adapts to training parent volunteers were provided. Head Start guidelines provided a process for developing the training plan which consisted of: determining who would develop the plan, conduct the training needs assessments, identify what areas of training would be covered, implement and evaluate the training. "Trying to plan and implement training without a training plan is a little like trying to take a trip without a roadmap. The purpose of the training plan is to serve as the roadmap on the path to successful training," Riley (1984:40).

> Developing a program training plan requires thought, planning, organization, and coordination, but the pay-off is evident: a training plan that meets the needs of the staff and strenthens the total program. No matter what the size of the program, the training plan provides the roadmap for a trip down the path of successful training. Use it, modify it, revise it - but don't ignor it. Riley (1984:74).

The training program was kept as informal as possible - allowing parent volunteers to observe teaching skills and strategies in the classrooms rather than only reading or hearing lectures from the trainees. Strategies for formal training programs, job descriptions and rigid evaluation techniques were rejected as being too structured to allow for enough classroom experiences in the ten week implementation period. If parent volunteers were to go on to become substitutes then a more formal training program would be instituted at that time. In planning the training program, it was kept in mind how short the implementation period was and that to retain parents as volunteers they would have to enjoy the program and be allowed as much interaction with the children as possible. Training needed to be reassuring and valuable to them in

developing needed skills for success in the classroom but should not be burdensome or waste time or make the parent feel they have enrolled in a course. It was noted in the research that formal training programs had a negative effect on parent volunteers.

The training program was designed to help parents see themselves as educators by teaching them skills for working with young children and by helping them to develop understandings of the developmental levels of the children. It gave parents enough practical knowledge to ensure their success in the classroom and gave them a sense of security which led to a feeling of accomplishment. It was important to offer quality training to make sure the parent volunteer program did not fail or lower the quality of the over-all program.

The training program consisted of four training sessions of one hour of training followed by one hour with the children in the classroom and a half hour of questions and discussions of the classroom experience with the trainers. These four sessions were held during the third and fourth weeks of the implementation period. This provided the balance of training with the practical classroom experiences and the pleasure of working with the children as well as quick response to questions and problems as they arose. The key to retention of the parent volunteers was to get them involved with the children as much and as soon as possible, recognizing they signed up to be classroom helpers, not students taking a course.

Topics covered in the training sessions were school policies and procedures, classroom procedures, classroom management, child development, curriculum expectations, positive reinforcement and behavior management, work attitudes and confidentiality. The actual training schedule appears in the ten week implementation calendar plan found in (Appendix R: 87). Two training sessions per week followed by participation in the classrooms kept interest levels high as parents were able to begin working with the children from the outset.

This training model followed the guide for training offered by Honig (1979) where a gradual movement from parent orientation and training to classroom participation is suggested. "Classroom participation is the final step in a training program for mothers which first

involves orientation and direct observation, then demonstration and role-play, then classroom participation with limited responsibility and finally classroom participation with instructional responsibility as permanent assistant. This graduated process may prove feasible in solving the problems of encouraging parent participation in the classroom while ensuring effectiveness of functioning." Honig (1979:31).

The training program was designed to hold separate training sessions for different subjects to be learned so as not to overwhelm the new volunteers and to get the parents into the classroom as much as possible. Parent volunteers were also invited to attend staff meetings but did not as they felt the volunteer training program was sufficient. Parents did not ask for additional training sessions after the initial four sessions as they felt the training manual received and the initial sessions were very comprehensive and sufficient.

This training model met the needs of the program and was inexpensive to implement as no additional staff needed to be hired as the directors were the trainers. The only cost to the program was for copies of training materials needed for distribution to parents and paper for parent and staff letters to be distributed to all parents. A training manual of materials from the school employee's manual and Head Start training materials, as well as reprints from journals, was assembled and distributed to each classroom volunteer.

Scheduling of the parents into the classrooms took place during the initial training period of the implementation plan. It was important to place the same parent with the same classroom for each work session so that teacher/parent training and evaluation could be meaningful and for continuity with the children.

"Research has shown us that one of the most important issues in a child's early development is his/her attachment to adults. As a result, most programs put a priority on consistency of adult staffing in the program. When substitutes are imported...they are not likely to become attached to the children. If the substitutes are trained in the center, they are apt to get positively involved, know everyone's name, and eventually become attached to the children in the classroom where they

will be working. "Copeland (1984:30). The same held true for the parent volunteer and every effort was made to place volunteers accordingly.

Parent attendance sheets (Appendix H: 65) were used every day and another good strategy in placing parents in the classrooms involved keeping a card on each parent detailing training received, interests, etc. "Keeping written records of information about each volunteer will also help you place them most happily and make sure they are offered increasingly complex responsibilities as their usefullness to program increases." Greenberg (1975:177). Parents who had previous teaching experience were used in instructional roles sooner than those who had no classroom experience.

The next step in the strategy for implementing the parent participation program was observing and evaluating the volunteers, staff and the training program." The purpose of evaluating the training program was to measure the extent to which the goals and objectives had been achieved. "Evaluate to: modify current training, assist in future planning and to prepare reports." Riley (1984: 143).

The director and assistant director observed the parent volunteers interacting with the children and staff weekly and recorded observations on the Director Observation forms found in (Appendix I: 67). Any problems were discussed with the volunteer and teacher at the end of the session. While in the classroom, the directors served as models for the behaviors they wanted from the volunteers and also offered assistance in helping the volunteers interact positively with the children and teachers. Changes in the program were an immediate outgrowth of the observation sessions. While observing the interactions between staff and parent volunteers, it was noted many times there was not enough meaningful activity for the parent helper who then became bored or felt useless. It was suggested to the teachers that they plan more science or table-game activities to enable the parent helper to have a more specific role to play in the classroom .

Another problem that surfaced was parents signing up and then not attending which left the teacher without expected additional help. There was also the problem of so many parents wanting to help and not enough

days available. Teachers feel they did not always need a parent helper and did not want to continue having parents signing up for every class day. Mid-way in the implementation period teachers and directors held informal conferences with the volunteers to assess performance, make suggestions and to solve problems. The volunteers and the staff received honest and constructive feedback, encouragement and suggestions for change if needed at this conference. The volunteer's comments and suggestions were solicited.

It was decided to hold a coffee with all classroom helpers who wanted to remain with the program and all teachers to discuss how to modify the program. Together the teachers and parent helpers decided the teachers would post a schedule of days when help was needed and special activities for the classroom helper to do would be available. Parent helpers agreed to call each other to substitute rather than not show up and inconvenience the teacher.

It was also decided at this time that informal feedback from the staff and directors was all that was wanted as an evaluation by the parent helpers. The plan to use the volunteer performance evaluation form found in (Appendix J: 69) was changed to include only those volunteers who wished to become staff substitutes and therefore needed a formal evaluation by the teacher and directors.

After making these modifications in the program, the final three weeks of using parent volunteers in the classroom ran more smoothly. The directors observed the parents interacting in more meaningful ways with the children who appeared to be enjoying and benefitting from the parent involvement. The staff seemed more positive in their acceptance of the parents in their classrooms and the directors reported the program was operating successfully.

The next step in the implementation strategy was the evaluation of the entire parent participation program which consisted of filling out parent and staff surveys found in (Appendix K: 71 and L: 74). The director tabulated the responses to these surveys to evaluate the success or failure in meeting the practicum objectives and to evaluate the overall impact of the program. The director also followed up with the par-

ent association steering committee chairman to measure parent participation in year round activities. Results of all the evaluation tools was used to determine the need for any follow-on activities. Using questionnaires for parents, staff and administrators to evaluate parent involvement programs was consistently suggested in the research literature as being the best evaluation method. Results of the evaluations and recommendations for follow-on activities are found in Chapter 5.

The final step in the implementation of the ten week practicum experience was appreciating the parent volunteers. A letter to all parents thanking them for their help was sent by the director and is found in (Appendix S:90)ofthe final report. Teachers and students sent thank you notes to the classroom volunteers and the outside classroom supporters such as the snow chain mother, party organizers, etc. A "thank you" coffee was held at school for the classroom volunteers who donated time to the class activities during the ten week program.

Chapter 5

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The practicum addressed the need to develop a parent participation program in a pre-school setting to create an interest in and to provide more opportunities for parent involvement and to recruit and train parent volunteers to increase the adult/child ratios in the classroom.

The success of the program was based on meeting the nine objectives detailed in chapter three which provided a means of implementing and evaluating the program. As will be seen in the following pages, the nine objectives were met and the overall results of the parent participation program were very positive and included many unexpected advantages in addition to the predicted outcomes. There were also some unexpected problems in dealing with the attitude of the staff toward the classroom volunteer part of the program, however modifications in that aspect of the program helped the staff to develop a more positive attitude which allowed the classroom volunteers to continue.

The first objective of providing opportunities for parents to participate in classroom and program activities as volunteers was measured by responses to letters from the parent association and the director, announcing the program and available activities (found in Appendix F:60 and G:62).

During the 10 week implementation period, parents became involved with the four parent association committees. Meetings were held with the communication committee and the directors which led to improvement in the monthly newsletters and better parent bulletin board communication. Suggestions for improving parent/teacher conferences were implemented which led to more input from the parents prior to the conferences. Teachers reported a more open and positive exchange took place during conferences held during the practicum implementation period. Second conferences at the end of the school year were requested by the parents and are being planned.

The playground committee secured a local builder who agreed to build new equipment at cost in exchange for free advertising in the school newsletter. Construction is planned for the spring.

The committee for the National Week of the Young Child made plans for an art fair to be held in a local mall in the spring and are also planning a book fair at the same time. A decision was made to begin a monthly book club in advance of the book fair and over 100 orders per month were processed during the practicum implementation period. This was an unexpected addition to the program and provided a new means for increasing oral reading in the home as parents became very involved in book reviewing and ordering for their children.

The committee to plan class trips and family outings presented a list of suggested field trips for spring and has arranged for the National Dairy Council and the National Safety Council to present programs to the children at school for the first time. A list of family outings available in the area now appears as a regular feature of the school monthly newsletter.

Objective two expected that 20% of the parents would participate in one or more of the steering committees. According to the committee chairmen and steering committee over 50% of the parents became involved. The communication committee had 15 members; the playground committee had 20 (of which 10 were fathers willing to help with construction); the Week of the Young Child committee had 25 members with another 30 who worked on the monthly book club; the field trip committee had 12 members and the original 25 members of the steering group and committee chairmen total 127 parents, representing 30% more involvement than was originally expected.

Objective three expected that 20% of the parents would sign up to participate in outside classroom activities on the registration forms found in (Appendix G: 62). A total of 94 parents returned these forms indicating the desire to participate in at least three activities outside the classroom. This represented 38% of the families and based on attendance records on special days and notes kept by teachers, a total of 30% actually participated. Teachers reported enthusiastic responses

to their requests for help and most of the activities listed on the activity list found in (Appendix G:62) are now being done by parent volunteers with teacher guidance. In addition, parents have volunteered to help in ways that were not listed such as building or donating furniture and equipment, designing new bulletin boards and bringing in visual aids and new lesson ideas. Parents who had teaching backgrounds were especially helpful in this way and provided a new resource for curriculum ideas.

Objective four expected 10% of the parents would register to become in-classroom volunteers. Response to the registration forms found in (Appendix G: 62) was overwhelming as 75 parents (30%) signed up for this program. Parent attendance records found in (Appendix H:65) showed that during the training program parents dropped out for various reasons: over-committed, not enough time, couldn't make training sessions, baby-sitting problems, etc., and at the end of the training sessions 37 parents (15%) remained with the program. This allowed for a much more manageable group as not all attended the same training sessions. Because the school has both 2 and 3 day programs either a.m. or p.m., the parent helpers for each session were no more than 10 per group. Since only one adult was assigned to any class at a time, there were enough parents to spread themselves out over the month so as not to be over-committed in time spent in class and to allow everyone the opportunity to attend. A review of the literature had stated again and again that parents do want to get involved if given the opportunity. Based on the overwhelming response in the number of parents who participated, which far exceeded the expectations of objectives 2, 3 and 4, this certainly proved to be true in the practicum experience.

The fifth and sixth objectives concerned providing a training program for parents that would increase their knowledge in school procedures and policies, child development, classroom skills and teaching strategies, behavior management and positive reinforcement techniques. The directors conducted the training program and during the training sessions observed the parents mastering this knowledge and demonstrating interest in learning more about behavior, etc. Their interested questions and discussions during these sessions were the key to needed

training and practical help in the classrooms. Using the observation sheet found in (Appendix I: 67) the directors observed the volunteers at least once a week in the classrooms and saw them actively involved with the children. According to the observation sheets, parents were observed responding to the children's needs in positive ways, using the encouragement techniques presented in the training. While initially the volunteers were hesitant to interact with the children, subsequent observation sheets showed more genuine and spontaneous interplay with the children as a result of the training program.

A review of the eight weeks of observation sheets showed a definite progression from inhibited, hesitant responses, guidance and activity on the part of the volunteers to positive initiatives and definite contributions to the classroom at the end of the implementation period. Parents were also heard using positive language modeling and encouraging self-help skills by the end of the implementation period.

It was the opinion of both the directors and the staff that the training program was successful.

The staff evaluation of parent volunteer performance found in (Appendix J: 69) originally planned to use in evaluating classroom volunteers was not used. Both teachers and volunteers rejected this as too formal and felt it should only be used to evaluate volunteers who planned to become substitutes after further training. The staff survey form found in (Appendix L:74) was used instead to evaluate the effectiveness of the training program. This survey revealed that 69% of the staff felt that the parent volunteers had been adequately trained (Appendix U:94). Discussions between the staff and director indicated teachers felt those who didn't appear to be adequately trained probably didn't listen or read the training manual and faulted the individual rather than the program.

Objective seven expected that parents would interact positively and would enjoy playing with the children and would gain confidence in helping them learn. As stated above, the director evaluation and observation forms found in (Appendix I: 67) clearly showed this had taken place.

Results of the parent survey found in (Appendix T: 92) revealed 87% of the parents surveyed felt they had been adequately trained for the

program, 74% said they learned about child growth and development; 81% learned about behavior management and 87% reported learning positive encouragement skills. While only 39% see themselves as teachers of young children, 71% feel their confidence in their ability to help children learn was increased.

Because the staff evaluation form found in (Appendix J: 69) was not used, this objective was not measured by the teaching staff; however, comments found on the staff evaluation found in (Appendix U:94) revealed that volunteers were most helpful in "playing with the children", reading to the children," "playing games," etc. Discussion at staff meetings indicated the staff felt the parent volunteers did seem to enjoy interacting with the children.

The eighth objective was concerned with how the parents will see the staff as a resource for learning about child development and child rearing. Results of the parent program evaluation survey found in (Appendix T: 92) reported 97% of the parents surveyed gained satisfaction from interaction with the staff and 84% reported the staff encouraged their participation. Written comments such as, "the hands-on training in the classroom with the teachers was most beneficial," "I have a greatly enhanced appreciation for the job teachers do and the knowledge they have," "I appreciate your openness and have gained insight into what early childhood learning is <u>really</u> all about," and "I do feel that the training offered was adequate and well planned. The meetings are very helpful and enjoyable;" "The volunteer manual provided a very beneficial preparation. Of course, the best training was the on-the-job with the staff;" showed that parents did learn from the staff and valued them as a resource for learning.

The final objective was concerned with parents feeling valued by the staff and receiving positive feedback and better responses to their concerns as parent volunteers. According to results of the parent survey form found in (Appendix T: 92) 77% reported feeling valued by the staff; 81% reported receiving positive feedback from the teachers; 81% felt communication between staff and parents improved as a result of the program; 90% reported they enjoyed the classroom volunteer role; and 97% gained satisfaction from interaction with the

staff. Many added additional comments about how rapport with parents and teachers was greatly enhanced, friendships developed between parents and teachers and they felt much more valued and comfortable with the school program since getting actively involved. Parents felt empathy and understanding between parents and staff had developed as a result of the program.

This reflects the references to the literature which repeatedly pointed out,"a big plus is the recognition that along with parental involvement usually comes parental understanding, cooperation and support." (Kennison, 1977:9). "Those who work together toward a common goal develop bonds and mutual understanding. They end up more closely affiliated to your operation." (Harmon, 1987:3).

In addition to the criteria of the nine objectives being met during the practicum experience, the tabulation of the parent's evaluation of the entire program revealed the following results:

100% of the parent classroom volunteers recommended that the volunteer program be continued as a regular part of the school program and 81% felt their child had benefited from the program; 87% felt there were enough opportunities to help in meaningful ways and 77% reported gaining self-confidence and better parenting skills they could use at home and at school. This is a good example of the benefits Honig stresses in parent involvement programs.

> Since parents are a child's most important people, and his or her earliest and most continuous teachers, more and more attention has been given not only to possible child gains over the relatively short span of enrichment programs but to increases in positive maternal attitudes and competencies with respect to self development as well as child development. (Honig (1979:48).

Director's letters about the program encouraged 81% of the parents to become involved which revealed that good organization and recruitment skills are effective.

Fifty-five percent of the parent classroom volunteers wish to receive further training to become substitute teachers in the school which provided a new source for qualified substitutes which have been in short supply.

Another benefit to parents was they formed new friendships with other volunteers and encouraged social outings with each other and their children. This was especially helpful to new families who are living far away from family.

Parents who participated in the classroom volunteer program had a higher visibility in the school, became well known by the staff and administration and were regarded with greater respect and appreciation as a result.

Benefits to the children were many as more of the curriculum could be delivered on an individual basis due to the extra help available in the classrooms. Children were exposed to more interaction with different adults which enlarged their social contacts and received positive feedback from the parent helpers as observed by the directors and as reported by the parents. Children were able to see their parents in the role of teachers who were involved in and supportive of their education. Written comments from parents on the survey forms revealed that their children saw them as sharing in their world and showing active enthusiasm for his or her learning, which helped the child feel more valued. Education began to receive a higher status in the ranking of family activities as parents became more involved with the school in so many ways. As one mother stated to the director, "my value with my son has increased tremendously since I became involved in the parent participation program. I am so <u>important</u> now - I never realized how much my getting involved in his world would mean to him." Another wrote a long list of all the positive things she felt the school was doing for her son and herself and went on to say, "the topping for me was being a lap, a hand tracer, helper in the classroom - thanks for the opportunity."

The staff evaluation of the total parent participation program found in (Appendix U: 94) revealed some unexpected results. While 69% of the teachers felt the program benefitted the school and 85% felt it benefitted the parents, only 38% felt it benefitted the children and the staff.

The staff was in 100% agreement that the parent participation program offered enough different opportunities for parents to become in-

volved in and 100% said they received adequate assistance from the parents who signed up to help with activities outside the classroom. However, only 54% felt the classroom volunteers proved beneficial to their class and want them to continue. Only 38% of the staff considered the parent classroom volunteers as part of the teaching team effort. The negative responses came from the teachers who worked in the self-contained classrooms while those who worked in the open-learning centers indicated a more positive response to volunteer classroom helpers.

The overall success of the parent participation program was reported by 62% of the staff and the same 62% recommend training classroom volunteers to be substitutes.

In addition to the survey questions, staff also added written comments citing that staff morale suffered as a result of the classroom helper part of the program. Some indicated they felt the children reacted negatively to having their mother in the room and some resented the fact that their mother didn't participate. Some felt they distracted the children and another felt the atmosphere changed when an extra person was in the room and that this was not beneficial. Another said having a volunteer promotes an unnatural classroom situation. She felt teachers did little talking for fear of saying the wrong thing and felt threatened by the presence of the parent helper, especially if it was a former teacher. Another stated she felt the school philosophy had changed from "child oriented" to"parent oriented."

Initially the director's reaction to the negative staff attitude toward the classroom volunteers was one of surprise and dismay as much time had been spent in staff meetings exploring staff feelings, gathering input and acceptance of the program. It was expected that staff would value the parent helpers, plan meaningful activities for them to participate in with the children and that ultimately parents and staff would form a partnership to facilitate the child's learning.

While many on staff did display an open, positive attitude toward classroom volunteers, not all teachers had come to value "parents as partners." It was clear that more time would be needed to reach this goal and modifications in the program would be necessary.

Most teachers felt strongly that they did not need a parent helper every day(which due to the overwhelming response to the program had been happening, to give every parent a chance to work in class). The teachers felt they could plan extra activities once or twice a week and if parents came in when the teacher needed them rather than all the time, the program would be better. While teachers had asked for more help in the past, having help every day was too much and led to resentment of the program on the part of some of the staff. "The author acknowledges that there can sometimes be too much of a good thing, and that parent involvement is not desireable when it inhibits the development of the relationship between teacher and child, or interferes with the teachers professional responsibilities." (Swap, 1987:7).

Conclusions

It is obvious from the analysis of the evaluation data as it relates to the stated objectives that the parent participation program was an overall success. Predictions based on the readings and surveys of the literature proved true in most cases. The program required a concentrated effort on the part of the director to organize, recruit and train interested parents, and those efforts were successful. The overwhelming response was sometimes a problem as finding ways to use so much help required some ingenuity. In the case of classroom volunteers, having so many wanting to help limited the number of times a parent could be in the classroom and the continuity of having familiar faces wasn't possible. However, the accepting attitude on the part of the children toward the parent helpers overcame this problem.

It was gratifying to see the many levels of interests parents had toward all aspects of the program and the decision to offer many levels of involvement was wise. At no time was anyone turned away for lack of an activity, and parents who dropped out of the classroom volunteer program were channelled into ways to help outside the classroom instead. No one was made to feel guilty if they couldn't participate and those who did help felt sincerely appreciated.

The problems the staff had with the parent volunteer program were largely attitudinal as parents reported feeling valued and treated

positively by the teachers. Obviously the negative feelings some staff had were not transmitted to the parents. It is the authors conclusion that the more confident teachers who planned activities for the parent helpers made better use of that part of the program. The less experienced and less organized teachers were the ones who felt threatened by the presence of "outsiders" in their classrooms. Also, the building set-up played a role in how much help was wanted by the staff. Teachers working in self-contained classrooms did not appreciate additional help as much as those working in open-learning centers where more adult help is required.

Future staff meetings will deal with this problem and efforts will be made to overcome any remaining negative feelings. In future years, more time will be spent at the outset of the program in exploring staff feelings and helping them see the value of classroom helpers. Also, more effort will be made to bring the volunteers and teachers together for informal coffees and planning times where teachers can explain routines, etc., before parents come into the classroom. More time spent informally getting to know the volunteers should help lessen the awkward feelings some teachers had toward "strangers" in the room as the coffee held mid-way in the implementation program for teachers and parent helpers had a very positive effect on the remainder of the program. Also, in the future, teachers will be consulted on how often help is wanted rather than sending volunteers in every day.

The training manual for parent volunteers was not made a part of the appendix as it pertains to working specifically in this particular school. It was a very valuable part of the training program and anyone planning to train parent volunteers should spend time preparing one for their specific needs.

The entire parent participation program will become a regular part of the school and it is expected it will be improved with time and will continue to be a valuable part of the school program.

The Parent Association and its committees have become a stronger, more active group in the school and it is expected more activities will be embarked upon in future years. While a parent advisory board has not

become a reality yet, it is conceivable this could become a future outgrowth of the Parent Association.

A substitute training program has been initiated as a result of parent classroom volunteers wishing to serve as substitutes in the school. Teachers will complete the formal parent classroom volunteer performance evaluation form found in (Appendix J: 69) for those requesting to be substitutes, and the directors will complete the training program.

In working with the parents and staff in developing this program, the author felt a genuine sense of pride evident in the participating parents that typified remarks made in the literature on the value of parent participation programs.

> For the school it was another validation of the important contribution parents can make to the school program. It is a constant effort to convince parents we need them, to provide the training and assurance they need to participate in the classroom and on advisory committees, and to maintain their interest and enthusiasm at a high level. The reward for these efforts is that parents really are partners with the staff. It's an exciting thing to be involved in and to witness. Together, parents and staff are improving the quality of education for the children. And that's what it's all about. (Kennison, 1977:11).

While the goal of developing a true "parents as partners philosphy" may not have been attained yet, the 10 week practicum period was too short to achieve such far-reaching goals. The author believes firmly in the validity of the parent participation program and expects to work continuously toward achieving any unmet goals in the future. The benefits to the school, staff, parents and especially the children make all the effort and time spent for this project worthwhile.

The author is considering submitting a manuscript for publication in the form of a manual for implementing successful parent participation programs in the pre-school based on the practicum experience.

Recommendations

The program described in this paper will be utilized on an ongoing basis in the work setting using the original plan described in the outline found in (Appendix Q: 84). The following modifications will take place and are recommended for anyone implementing a parent participation program.

1. More time be spent in developing a positive attitude toward parent helpers on the part of the staff before instituting a parent classroom helper program.

2. More opportunities for staff and parents to meet informally to discuss needs, goals of the program, ideas and classroom routines before the training program begins.

3. More sharing of ways to use parent helpers between staff members will be encouraged so those who have positive attitudes will help instill this in those who don't.

4. More staff input on scheduling of parent helpers into the classroom when needed, not always every day.

5. Evaluation will be done after a longer implementation period than only 10 weeks. The practicum experience did not allow enough time for the program to be fully appreciated or evaluated.

The author feels strongly that parent participation programs should be tried in all school settings and with flexibility and modifications can be made to work positively and for the benefit of all involved.

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APPENDIX A

PARENT PARTICIPATION SURVEY

Dear Parents:

We are attempting to assess the need for more opportunities for parent involvement in the nursery school program and would sincerely appreciate your opinions. Please leave your unsigned forms in the office.

Thank you,

The Nursery School Staff

QUESTIONS	Yes	No
1. Would it be beneficial for your child to have parental involvement in the school program?		
2. Would the school benefit from more parent participation in the program?		
3. Do you agree there is not enough opportunity for parents to become directly involved in the program?		
4. Do you feel there should be more parent sponsored activities such as book fairs, school picnics, etc.?		
5. Should the staff encourage parents to participate in classroom activities?		
6. Are you interested in limited classroom involvement such as snow chain mother, party mother, etc.?		
7. Are you willing to help with annual activities such as book fairs, playground clean-up, etc.?		
8. Would you be interested in volunteering as a classroom assistant to work directly with the children?		

Please list below any comments or suggestions.

APPENDIX B

RESULTS OF PARENT PARTICIPATION SURVEY

QUESTIONS	Yes	%	No	%
1. Would it be beneficial for your child to have parental involvement in the school program?	180	90%	20	10%
2. Would the school benefit from more parent participation in the program?	180	90%	20	10%
3. Do you agree there is not enough opportunity for parents to become directly involved in the program?	180	90%	20	10%
4. Do you feel there should be more parent sponsored activities such as book fairs, school picnics, etc.?	160	80%	40	20%
5. Should the staff encourage parents to participate in classroom activities?	100	50%	100	50%
6. Are you interested in limited classroom involvement such as snow chain mother, party mother, etc.?	100	50%	100	50%
7. Are you willing to help with annual activities such as book fairs, playground clean-up, etc.?	160	80%	40	20%
8. Would you be interested in volunteering as a classroom assistant to work directly with the children?	40	20%	160	80%

NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

INFORMATION TO PARENTS

NOTE: Under provisions of the Manual of Standards for Child Care Centers (N.J.A.C.10:122), every licensed child care center in New Jersey must provide to parents of enrolled children written information on parent visitation rights, State licensing requirements, child abuse/neglect reporting requirements and other child care matters. The center may comply with this requirement: 1- by reproducing and distributing to parents this written statement, prepared by the Bureau of Licensing in the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS); or 2- by incorporating the required information in its own handbooks, brochures or other informational materials. In keeping with this requirement, the center must secure every parent's signature attesting to his/her receipt of the information.

Bureau of Licensing
(609)292-1018.

* * *

- Our center is required by the State Child Care Center Licensing Law to be licensed by the Bureau of Licensing of the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). A copy of our current license must be posted in a prominent location at our center. Look for it when you're in the center.

- To be licensed, our center must comply with the Manual of Standards for Child Care Centers (the official licensing regulations). The regulations cover such areas as: physical environment/life-safety; staff qualifications, supervision, and staff/child ratios; program activities and equipment; health, food and nutrition; rest and sleep requirements; parent/community participation; administrative and recordkeeping requirements; and others.

- Our center must have on the premises a copy of the Manual of Standards and make it available to interested parents for review. If you would like to review our copy, just ask any staff member. Parents may secure a copy of the Manual of Standards for Child Care Centers, for a nominal fee, by writing to the DYFS Bureau of Licensing, One South Montgomery Street, CN717, Trenton, NJ 08625.

- We encourage parents to discuss with us any questions or concerns about the policies and program of the center or the meaning, application or alleged violations of the Manual of Standards. If you suspect our center may be in violation of licensing standards, you are entitled to report them to the Bureau of Licensing. Of course, we would appreciate your bringing these concerns to our attention, too.

- Parents are entitled to review the center's copy of the Bureau of Licensing's Inspection/Violation Reports on the center, which are issued after every State licensing inspection of our center. Let us know if you wish to review them and we will make them available for your review.

- Our center must post its written statement of philosophy on child discipline in a prominent location and to make a copy of it available to parents upon request. We encourage you to review it and to discuss with us any questions you may have about it.

- Our center must offer parents of enrolled children ample opportunity to participate in and observe the activities of the center. Parents wishing to participate in the activities or operations of the center should discuss their interest with the center director, who can advise them of what opportunities are available.

- Parents of enrolled children may visit our center at any time without having to secure prior approval from the director or any staff member. Please feel free to do so when you can. We welcome visits from our parents.

- Our center must inform parents in advance of every field trip, outing, or special event away from the center, and must obtain prior written consent from parents before taking a child on each such trip.

- Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that an enrolled child has been or is being subjected to any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation by any person, whether working at the center or not, is required by State law to report the concern to the DYFS Office of Child Abuse Control, Toll-Free at 1-800-792-8610. Such reports may be made anonymously.

- Parents may secure information about child abuse and neglect by contacting: Community Education Office, Division of Youth and Family Services, One South Montgomery Street, CN717, Trenton, NJ 08625.

* * *

State of New Jersey

CHILD CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL
1 SOUTH MONTGOMERY STREET
CN 717
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625
(609) 292-0406

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September 8, 1987

Dear Colleague:

On behalf of the New Jersey Child Care Advisory Council, I would like to thank you for your expressed interest in the development of our plan, Child Care: Today's Challenge for Tomorrow. The overwhelming response to our letter of April 1, 1987 far exceeded our expectations and has served to reinforce the Council's commitment to the expansion and enhancement of New Jersey's Child Care System.

Unfortunately, the volume of requests for copies of the initial draft far surpassed our anticipation. Cost and time restrictions make it virtually impossible to distribute the final draft to the child care community at large at this time. We are, however, enclosing a brief summary of the plan that will give you an overall picture of its scope, findings and concerns.

The Council's timetable allows for publication in early December, at which time you will be mailed a copy of the actual plan itself. We also anticipate having an event at which the plan will be introduced and to which you will be invited. We will keep you informed of the plan's progress as the date of publication and the event becomes finalized.

Copies of the complete draft are available for examination in the office of the Child Care Advisory Council, 1 South Montgomery Street, Trenton, New Jersey. If you would like further information regarding this, please contact Ed Mottershead, Administrative Assistant to the Council, at (609) 984-8202.

Again, we thank you for your interest and support as we continue to work for the best interests of New Jersey's children and families.

Sincerely,

Ciro A. Scalera

Ciro A. Scalera
Chairperson

CS/em
enclosure

New Jersey Is An Equal Opportunity Employer

building/fire codes and licensing requirements; expansion of the voucher child care subsidy program to increase availability of private child care to low and moderate income or special needs families; increase in state funding to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) to raise the number of subsidized child care slots available; allocation of state monies to fund a New Jersey Head Start-like program; targeting of funding to provide child care services to teenage parents who are in school or training; provision of specific funds to address child care needs of special populations, i.e., parents in correctional institutions, parents in residential substance abuse facilities and parents who are victims of domestic violence; increase in the level of resources in support of family day care; an increase in funding to the New Jersey Child Care Resource and Referral System; promotion of state government for a leadership role in the provision of child care services to its employees; and an exploration of all avenues to increase salaries for child care workers and professional staff.

ISSUE: Child Care: The Profession

FINDING: There is a great deal of concern on the part of child care professionals regarding certification requirements for early childhood educators.

RECOMMENDATIONS: A comprehensive survey of salaries paid to child care staff should be completed, analyzed and solutions developed; the New Jersey Departments of Education and Human Services should commission a study of the long-term impact on the state's child care and early childhood education system, taking care to evaluate the effects on provision of services and quality of care in early childhood programming; child care training courses based on a comprehensive training model which fosters career development and addresses multi-cultural/lingual approaches should be made available and accessible to child care providers; and society must recognize the value of child care as a profession, so capable individuals will be attracted to and retain in this field.

ISSUE: Parental Role and Responsibilities

FINDING: A partnership approach between child care providers and parents will benefit the parent, the provider and, most importantly, the child.

RECOMMENDATIONS: All child care programs should be required to have parent organizations, parent groups or advisory committees and to allow parent input into the program, including goals and objectives and parent feedback; child care programs should be designed to encourage parental involvement; and parents and providers must work together to ensure programs developed are sensitive to and appropriate for multi-ethnic populations.

ISSUE: Meeting Families' Unique Needs

P. 117 OF STATE MANUAL OF STANDARDS FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS
-117-

3. A written policy providing for the direct involvement of parents in the center's operation and activities, and which should include community representatives, including persons from the civic, business, educational and child care community. The center shall keep on file a copy of this policy and records documenting its implementation. The policy should reflect such activities as:

   i. The use of parents and/or community representatives as volunteers to help in the center's program;

   ii. Periodic meetings between parents/community representatives and center administrators and staff;

   iii. Open houses, to which parents/community representatives are invited for the purpose of visiting and observing the center;

   iv. Presentations/talks by local officials and professionals in the community to enhance the center staff's and the children's knowledge of community services, programs and resources;

   v. Presentations by center staff members at community functions; and/or

   vi. Use of the center's facilities for community meetings and functions.

APPENDIX F

PARENT ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents:

At the end of last year's school term, a group of interested mothers of children attending Long Valley Christian Nursery School met to form a steering group which would lead to the formation of a Parent's Association for the pre-school. The steering group met before the beginning of this school year to discuss where we as parents could seek involvement in the pre-school experience of our children.

Sub committees were established to coordinate activities for the upcoming school year. Chairpersons were named to each of the following sub-committees:

1. Communications - to enhance information flow both from the classroom to parents and vice-versa. Several parents expressed the desire to know more about what goes on in the classroom, therefore enabling them to reinforce the learned material at home. It was also suggested, to obtain more feed-back on your child, a second teacher's conference at the end of the school year should be held. Chairperson -

2. Playgroup equipment - we need a few willing fathers to collaborate on the construction of new playground equipment. would like to see a car made out of landscape ties for the Zion site, and a slide for the Liebensell site. Chairperson -

3. National Children's Week/Book Fair - it was suggested to organize a display at a local mall - displaying our children's art work. We may also be able to include some aspect of public awareness concerning children in society today. We also thought this would be a good week to plan a school book fair. Chairpersons -

4. Class trips/family outings - investigate alternative class trips. Organize an optional family outing for a weekend day. Plan the year-end family picnic. Chairperson -

The sub-committees are just being formed, and we ask for your comments, suggestions and willingness to help, if desired, be communicated to the prospective chairpersons. In addition to this association, is organizing a parents' participation program which will unable interested parents to take a more active role in the classroom. More on this program will follow later.

We originally intended the Parent's Association as a vehicle in which we could enhance our children's pre-school experience, and we hope we can count on your support. We have appointed a contact person at each nursery school site who you can call on for more information or with suggestions -

Thank you,

The Steering Group

APPENDIX G

DIRECTOR LETTER & PARENT CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION FORM 62

Dear Parents:

As you can see, the Parent Association is off to a good start in their first year of operation at the Nursery School. Many different ideas for supporting our program have been offered for your consideration, and it is my hope that every family will participate in some way.

Research has shown that children of involved parents do better in school, have fewer behavior problems and that involved parents can greatly enhance the quality of their child's education. I believe you parents are a vital part of our program and deserve a well-planned participation program that is varied enough to give everyone an opportunity to get involved. I believe children learn best in these early years when parents and teachers work together to promote their education. Children value learning and feel more confident in a supportive atmosphere where parents and staff function as partners in promoting their growth and development. For that reason, I am making the parent-participation program my number one priority this year.

While I will be helping the committees wherever needed, my main contribution will be to develop a volunteer program for interested parents to become more directly involved in the daily classroom activities. The children will benefit from more adult interaction and individualized instruction from their teachers. The staff will benefit by having more help to lighten their load which frees them to deliver our curriculum to every child, and they will be better able to understand and respond to your concerns as they work together with you. Parents will learn about child development and behavior techniques which will help improve parenting skills. I hope to build a strong bridge between home and school as we share information, teaching strategies and ideas to improve our program.

Those who sign up to be classroom helpers will go through informal training sessions designed to help you develop the skills you need to be successful in working with young children. You will learn how to talk to children, how to use positive encouragement and techniques for promoting positive behaviors before you begin to work with the children.

If you are unable to work directly in the classroom, there are many other ways for you to become involved which are listed on the attached sign-up sheet. Please return the attached form to the main office as soon as possible so we can begin this important program. Get involved with your child's program and enjoy the fun and satisfaction of helping young children learn! I look forward to working with you as we develop mutual bonds of understanding and commitment to your children and our program.

Sincerely,

Director

PARENT CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

PARENT'S NAME _____ CHILD'S NAME _____ TEACHER _____ CLASS _____

I am interested in being a classroom volunteer and am available at the following times:

ZION BUILDING: _____ M/W/F A.M _____ M/W.F P.M. _____ Tue/Thurs A.M. _____ Tue/Thurs P.M.

LIEB BUILDING: _____ Wed/Fri A.M. _____ Wed/Fri P.M.

Age level preferred: _____ 2½ yrs. (Lieb only) _____ 3 yrs. _____ 4 yrs. (Zion only)

I prefer to work in my own child's class: _____ YES _____ NO _____ SOMETIMES

I am available approximately _____ WEEKLY _____ TWICE MONTHLY _____ MONTHLY _____ OCCASIONALLY

I would like to help in the classroom with the following activities:

_____Set up classroom, big room, playground
_____Set up and clean up snack
_____Read to children
_____Play table games with children
_____Assist in block area
_____Assist in dramatic play
_____Assist with science experiments
_____Assist with nature walks
_____ Help on playground
_____ Help dress for snow play
_____ Make materials for art projects
_____ Help children with art projects
_____ Assist with art clean up
_____ Bag papers at end of day
_____ Assist with car dismissal
_____ Please add your own ideas below
_____

Special talents I can share with my child's class:

I am unable to be a classroom volunteer but would like to assist my child's teacher and support classroom activities in the following ways:

HELP ON SPECIAL DAYS IN CLASSROOM

____Comb hair on picture day
____Help with holiday parties
____Drive or ride on field trips
____Scrape & paint playground equipment & school furniture
____Help teachers with bulletin boards
____Help with cooking projects
____Please add your own ideas below

HELP I CAN DO AT HOME

____Make birthday crowns & cards
____Set up snow chain
____Organize field trip drivers
____Organize holiday parties
____Organize end of year class picnic
____Make playdoh
____Make new flannel board patterns
____Make cover for art cart
____Wash/repair toys, smocks, doll clothes
____Sew new doll clothes
____Refurbish dress-up box
____Collect special art materials
____Make tracing and art patterns
____Repair books
____Please add your own ideas below

Please feel free to make suggestions to help make this parent participation program a success. Leave this form in the office and you will be contacted about training sessions and how to begin assisting in the areas you have chosen. Thank you for your support.

Director

APPENDIX H

ATTENDANCE SHEET FOR
PARENT CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS

NAME	DATE	CLASS ASSIGNED	ACTIVITY INVOLVEMENT

APPENDIX I

DIRECTOR OBSERVATION FORM FOR PARENT CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS

PARENT CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER OBSERVATION SHEET

CLASS_____ NAME_____ DATE_____

DIRECTOR'S OBSERVATION OF VOLUNTEER:

1. Activity observed:
2. Participation of children:
3. Volunteer's participation
4. Volunteer's rapport with children:
   - A. Ability to involve children:
   - B. Attitude toward children:
   - C. Attitude toward activity:
   - D. Flexibility:
   - E. Initiative:
   - F. Offers help to staff willingly:
   - G. Uses positive encouragement and reinforcement techniques with children:
   - H. Displays knowledge of child development and growth:
   - I. Understands children and their behavior, responds to their needs:
   - J. Uses behavior management techniques provided in training:

DIRECTOR'S OBSERVATION OF STAFF:

1. Teaching staff demonstrates open communication with parent volunteers:
2. Staff appears to use parent volunteer in meaningful activities:
3. Staff gave clear directions and offered assistance to parent volunteers:
4. Staff showed encouragement toward parent volunteers:
5. Staff gave positive feedback to parent volunteers:
6. Staff appears to genuinely value parent volunteers and shows appreciation of volunteer's efforts.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

APPENDIX J

PARENT CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Parent Volunteer _____ Classroom Teacher (Evaluator) _____

		SHOWS IMPROVEMENT	GOOD
1.	ATTITUDE TOWARD		
	Children	____	____
	Parents	____	____
	Teaching Staff	____	____
	Administration	____	____
	Other Parent Volunteers	____	____
	Program	____	____
2.	ABILITY TO WORK WITH OTHERS		
	Assumes responsibility	____	____
	Takes initiative	____	____
	Contributes to an environment of cooperation and constructive effort	____	____
	Contributes new ideas	____	____
3.	ADAPTABILITY		
	Changing working hours	____	____
	Working extra hours	____	____
	Helping with other groups	____	____
	Profits from constructive criticism	____	____
4.	PERFORMANCE		
	Friendly, relates positively to children & adults	____	____
	Carries out instructions	____	____
	Involves children in activities	____	____
	Handling of behavior problems	____	____
	Develops positive rapport with children	____	____
	Uses positive encouragement & reinforcement with children	____	____
	Able to respond to children's needs	____	____
	Understands different age levels	____	____
	Demonstrates flexibility	____	____
	Remains controlled in difficult situations	____	____
	Displays enthusiasm for parent volunteer program	____	____
	Dresses appropriately for working with young children	____	____
	Speaks clearly and distinctly	____	____
	Displays sinse of humor	____	____
5.	CONFORMS TO SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES		
	Willingness to attend training sessions	____	____
	Ability to accept and use training	____	____
	Willingness to change	____	____
	Attendance and dependability	____	____
	Punctuality	____	____
	Understands and conforms to school policy	____	____
	Adheres to classroom and school procedures	____	____
	Behaves ethically with students, parents & staff	____	____
	Demonstrates tact, compassion & empathetic concern for children & families	____	____
	Respects confidentiality	____	____
	Makes real effort to become involved with program	____	____

_____ _____ _____

Evaluator (Director/Assistant Director) Date

COMMENTS:

APPENDIX K

PARENT CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM EVALUATION SURVEY

Dear Parent Classroom Volunteers:

It is important to receive your evaluation of the classroom volunteer program you have participated in these past weeks. Your comments, suggestions and recommendations will help improve, change or decide the future of this program. Please return this form to the Director as soon as possible. Thank you for your help.

	YES	NO
1. Has your child benefited from the parent volunteer program?	____	____
2. What encouraged you to sign up for this program?		
Director's letter?	____	____
Staff invitation?	____	____
Other parents ?	____	____
3. Were there enough opportunities for you to help in meaningful ways?	____	____
4. Did the staff encourage your participation?	____	____
5. Did you receive positive feedback from the teachers?	____	____
6. Did the teaching staff value your presence and make you feel a welcome part of the teaching team?	____	____
7. Do you feel communication between staff and parents has improved as a result of this program?	____	____
8. Were you adequately trained for this program?	____	____
9. Did you learn about child growth and development?	____	____
behavior management?	____	____
positive encouragement skills?	____	____
10. Do you see yourself as a teacher of young children as a result of this experience?	____	____
11. Has your confidence in your ability to help children learn increased?	____	____
12. Do you feel you have gained self-confidence and better parenting skills you can use at home from this program?	____	____
13. Did you enjoy the classroom volunteer role?	____	____
14. Did you gain satisfaction from interaction with the staff?	____	____
children?	____	____
other volunteers?	____	____
15. Do you recommend the parent classroom volunteer program be continued as a regular part of the school program?	____	____
16. Would you be interested in further training to become a substitute teacher in our school?	____	____

17. Please describe your personal feelings about this experience and other benefits to you and your child not previously mentioned.

18. What recommendations for improvement in training, activities offered to parent volunteers or other suggestions would you like to offer for consideration?

Your comments, ideas and suggestions and your hours of service as parent volunteers are sincerely appreciated.

APPENDIX L

STAFF EVALUATION OF PARENT PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

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	YES	NO
1. Has the Parent Participation Program been of value to the school?	____	____
the parents?		
the children?	____	____
the staff?	____	____
2. Do you feel the Parent Participation Program offers enough different opportunities for parents to become involved in throughout the year? (If you answered no - please list additional activities you feel should be offered at the end of this survey under question 9).	____	____
3. Did the classroom volunteer program prove beneficial to your class?	____	____
4. Do you consider the parent volunteers as part of the teaching team effort in your classroom?	____	____
5. Did you receive adequate assistance from the parents who signed up for the classroom support activities? (Ex: snow chain)	____	____
6. Were parent volunteers assigned to your classroom adequately trained? (If you answered no - please list additional training needed under question 12).	____	____
7. Do you want the parent classroom volunteers program to continue?	____	____
8. Do you consider the overall Parent Participation Program a success?	____	____
9. Would you recommend training interested parent volunteers to be substitute teachers?	____	____

10. Please list additional year round activities you feel the Parent Participation Program should undertake.

11. What other activities <u>in the classroom</u> do you feel should be offered to parents?

12. What additional activities would you recommend be offered to classroom support activities?

13. What additional training would you recommend for the Parent Classroom Volunteers?

14. In what ways were parent volunteers most helpful?

APPENDIX M

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DIRECTORS OF PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

1. Do you have a Parent Involvement Program?

2. Describe your Parent Involvement Program.

3. Do you have parent classroom volunteers on a regular basis?

4. What training do you provide?

5. How are parents recruited?

6. What percentage of your parents participate?

7. What evaluation methods do you use?

8. Have you considered becoming a parent co-operative school?

9. To what do you attribute the success or failure of your parent program?

10. What new ideas do you plan to try in the future with your parents?

APPENDIX N

LETTER TO STAFF INTRODUCING PARENT PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

Dear Staff,

This year I expect to develop a well-organized Parent Involvement Program which will offer enough different ways for participation so that every family can get involved.

It is my belief that the parent component (now recommended by the National Academy and mandated by the State) is the weakest link in our program. Children learn best when schools and parents work as a team in providing for their education. The time has come when we need to encourage more parent involvement in our program, not just as field-trip drivers and snack mothers.

Part of the plan for parent involvement will include classroom support activities and actual classroom volunteers who will become trained members of our teaching staff. This is where your efforts can make a big difference to the success of the Parent Participation Program. You will be needed to suggest ways parents can help you in your classrooms and you will also be called upon to help with the on-the-job segment of the parent volunteer training program.

The staff meeting next week will be devoted to a discussion of the staff's role in the Parent Participation Program, and your help is needed in two ways. Please bring a list of all the ways you think parent volunteers can assist both inside and outside your classroom, and please bring an open mind and arrive at the meeting with a positive attitude toward this new program. In order for everyone to benefit, we must all begin with a "can-do" approach and be open to new ideas.

I expect having a stronger Parent Participation Program will be rewarding for all of us, and I look forward to working toward that goal with you.

Sincerely,

Director

APPENDIX O

LETTER TO CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS ANNOUNCING ORIENTATION MEETING

Dear Parent Volunteer:

Thank you for signing up for our parent classroom volunteer program. Our first orientation session will be held on when we will begin our informal training program and develop work schedules.

You have chosen one of the best ways to serve your school and your child. As a parent classroom volunteer, you make a gift of your time. The training course you are now entering is designed to give you an overall picture of Early Childhood Education to help you understand the needs of young children and to develop some skills for working with them.

As a parent volunteer in our program, we want you to know that you will not be called upon to perform any service that we have not trained you for as we want you to enjoy and feel successful as you work with the children. Children, particularly small ones, need a familiar person to be with and to help them. Please give them time to get used to you. Their range of adult acquaintances is very small, especially in the playgroup and three year old classes. In time they will accept you as a familiar friend if you help in the classroom on a regular basis.

Your role in the program will be that of an aide to the professional teaching staff for the care and education of the children. There will be many routine tasks you will be asked to help with that may or may not involve the children but they all make a contribution to the well-being of the children in the program. If you are not always directly involved with the children, remember - maybe you are freeing the person the children are most familiar with, their teacher, to give them more of the attention they need.

All parent volunteers will be expected to maintain professional attitudes and self-discipline. Anything of a personal nature that you may hear about a child or a family must be held in strictest confidence if you are able to remain with the program. We know you appreciate us holding your concerns in confidence as well.

During the training program, you will receive training materials that we hope will prove good references for you. Please feel free to make any suggestions or recommendations as we go along.

Sincerely,

Director

APPENDIX P
PARENT VOLUNTEER TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Dear Parent Volunteer,

To assist in the development of a training program that will be both interesting and useful to you as you join our Parent Classroom Volunteer Program, please fill out the training needs form below and return at the end of this first training session.

WHAT I WANT TO LEARN	WHY I NEED TO LEARN THIS	WHAT I HOPE TO GAIN FROM TRAINING

APPENDIX Q
STRATEGY OUTLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARENT PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

A. DEVELOPING A PARENT ASSOCIATION
   1. Form a Parent Association
      a) hold general meeting
      b) appoint steering committee chairman
      c) elect building representatives
   2. Establish Parent Project Committees
      a) appoint project chairman
      b) provide director support for parent activities

B. COMMUNICATION
   1. Letter to parents announcing parent involvement projects from Parent Association
   2. Letter to staff announcing Parent Participation Program
   3. Staff meeting on Parent Participation Program
      a) motivate staff to want active Parent Participation Program
      b) staff input on use of classroom volunteers
      c) staff involvement in parent training program

C. RECRUITMENT
   1. Director letter and registration forms to parents announcing Parent Classroom Volunteer Program
   2. Posters displayed in building to recruit parents
   3. Collect registration forms - process forms
   4. Contact parents who didn't respond and invite participation

D. ORIENTATION
   1. Welcoming letter to parent classroom volunteers announcing date of orientation session
   2. Director holds orientation meeting
      a) needs assessments filled out
      b) training schedule announced
      c) parents assigned to teachers
   3. Teachers contact classroom support parents to set up snow chains, etc.

E. TRAINING PROGRAM
   1. Set up four training sessions
   2. Use parent self-assessment guides to determine training needs
   3. Basic training topics:
      a) school policies and classroom procedures
      b) child development and curriculum expectations
      c) positive reinforcement and behavior management
      d) additional training based on staff and parent requests
   4. Parents observe in classrooms
   5. Parents participate in classrooms

F. OBSERVATION AND EVALUATION OF PARENT VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

1. Director and Assistant Director observe parent volunteers weekly using observation form
   a) meet with volunteers to discuss progress and training needs
2. Directors observe staff interaction with volunteers
   a) discuss program value to staff, recommendations for changes, training needs
3. Staff evaluation conferences with volunteers
   a) informal conference held with parent, teachers and directors to evaluate program and make changes, etc.
4. Parent Volunteer Performance Evaluations
   a) Teachers fill out performance evaluations on parent volunteers
   b) Directors and teachers hold final performance evaluation conference with volunteers

G. EVALUATION OF PARENT PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

1. Parent volunteers submit program evaluation surveys
2. Staff submit program evaluation surveys
3. Director tabulates responses to surveys
4. Director follows up with steering committee chairman to measure parent participation in year round activities
5. Results of all evaluation tools used to determine success or failure of program
6. Director assesses need for follow-on activities based on final evaluation

H. APPRECIATION OF PARENT VOLUNTEERS

1. Director sends thank you letter to all parents reporting success of program
2. Teachers and students send thank you notes to classroom volunteers
3. Director gives "thank you" coffee for classroom volunteers

APPENDIX R

CALENDAR PLAN
10 WEEK IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Prior to implementation, Parent Association meets with Director to form ideas and committees for the Parent Participation Program. Director offers help to implement program and order necessary materials.

WEEK 1 COMMUNICATION

1. Send letter to parents from Parent Association (Appendix F)
2. Send letter to staff from Director announcing Parent Participation Program (Appendix N)
3. Hold staff meeting to discuss Parent Participation Program and Parent Classroom Volunteer Program
4. Director sends letter and registration forms to parents announcing Parent Classroom Volunteer Program (Appendix G)
5. Posters are put up in buildings

WEEK 2 REGISTRATION OF PARENT CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS

1. Registration forms from interested parent classroom volunteers will be collected
2. Registration forms will be separated into classroom volunteers and outside support volunteers
3. Parents who didn't respond will be called
4. Lists of non-working parents without younger siblings will be used to invite more parents to respond
5. Date for just orientation session will be set, parents will be notified by letter (Appendix O)
6. Teachers contact outside classroom volunteers to assign activities (ex: snow chain, party mothers, etc.)

WEEK 3 ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

1. First orientation session is held - parents fill out training needs assessment forms (Appendix P)
2. Training schedule is announced
3. Parents assigned to teachers
4. First training session is held - school policies and classroom procedures
5. Parents observe in classrooms
6. Parent attendance sheets are used (Appendix H) from now on - every day

WEEK 4 TRAINING CONTINUED

1. Second training session - child development and reasonable expectations in the Early Childhood Curriculum
2. Parents observe in classrooms
3. Third training session - positive reinforcement and behavior management techniques.

WEEK 4 (continued)

4. Parents assist in classrooms
5. Directors observe parents in classrooms

WEEK 5 - 7

1. Additional training session based on parent needs
2. Parents participate in classrooms
3. Directors observe parent volunteers once a week using observation form found in Appendix I
4. During Week 7 teachers and Directors will hold informal evaluation conferences with parents and determine future training needs

WEEKS 8 and 9

1. Directors offer additional training if needed
2. Changes made in program if needed based on evaluation
3. Parents work in classrooms
4. Directors observe parents weekly

WEEK 10

1. Parents continue working in classes
2. Teachers fill out performance evaluation on parent volunteer (Appendix J)
3. Directors and teacher hold final performance evaluation conference with volunteers
4. Parent classroom volunteers fill out program evaluation survey (Appendix K)
5. Staff fills out evaluation of parent program survey (Appendix L)

WEEK 11

1. Director will tabulate responses to parent and staff survey to determine success or failure of Parent Participation Program
2. Director will determine any follow-on to program based on final evaluation of program results

WEEK 12 - 15

1. Director will begin writing final report for practicum

WEEK 15

1. Director will submit final report to practicum review board

APPENDIX S

THANK YOU LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents,

On behalf of the school, the staff and especially your children, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation for your help with the Parent Participation Program this year.

Because there were so many different opportunities to become involved, every family has been able to make a contribution of their time and talents toward our program. The response to our requests for help were overwhelming and the enthusiasm for the program was far greater than expected. Consequently the benefits have been far greater than hoped for and we have already accomplished more than had been planned.

Those of you who worked with the Parent Association committees have helped improve our playgrounds, initiated more communication between the school and home, improved our parent teacher conferences, formed a book club, planned a book fair and art show, and provided new field trips, guest speakers and family outings.

Those who helped with classroom activities such as bulletin boards, snow chain, making play doh, etc. have been a tremendous help to our teaching staff.

Those who went thru our training program and became classroom helpers enabled us to enrich our program and deliver more of our curriculum on an individual basis to the children.

As you can see the school, the staff, the children and you the parents have all benefited tremendously from your involvement in so many aspects of our program. You have become a vital part of our school and you now play a much greater role in the growth and development of your children.

It has been a pleasure for me to see parents and children enjoying the close association at school and I hope all of you will continue to be "participating" parents throughout your child's school years.

Thank you again for sharing your time, talents and treasures (your children). You have given a great gift to the school.

Sincerely,

Director

APPENDIX T

RESULTS OF
PARENT CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM EVALUATION SURVEY

Dear Parent Classroom Volunteers:

It is important to receive your evaluation of the classroom volunteer program you have participated in these past weeks. Your comments, suggestions and recommendations will help improve, change or decide the future of this program. Please return this form to the Director as soon as possible. Thank you for your help.

	YES	%	NO	%	N/A	%
1. Has your child benefited from the parent volunteer program?	25	81	0	0	6	17
2. What encouraged you to sign up for this program?						
Director's letter?	25	81	0	0	6	17
Staff invitation?	1	3	4	13	26	84
Other parents ?	2	6	4	13	25	81
3. Were there enough opportunities for you to help in meaningful ways?	27	87	0	0	4	13
4. Did the staff encourage your participation?	26	84	1	3	4	13
5. Did you receive positive feedback from the teachers?	25	81	2	6	4	13
6. Did the teaching staff value your presence and make you feel a welcome part of the teaching team?	24	77	2	6	5	16
7. Do you feel communication between staff and parents has improved as a result of this program?	25	81	4	13	2	6
8. Were you adequately trained for this program?	27	87	2	6	2	6
9. Did you learn about child growth and development?	23	74	5	16	3	10
behavior management?	25	81	2	6	4	13
positive encouragement skills?	27	87	1	3	3	10
10. Do you see yourself as a teacher of young children as a result of this experience?	12	39	11	35	8	26
11. Has your confidence in your ability to help children learn increased?	22	71	4	13	5	16
12. Do you feel you have gained self-confidence and better parenting skills you can use at home from this program?	24	77	2	6	5	16
13. Did you enjoy the classroom volunteer role?	28	90	0	0	3	10
14. Did you gain satisfaction from interaction with the staff?	30	97	0	0	1	3
children?	30	97	0	0	1	3
other volunteers?	22	71	0	0	9	29
15. Do you recommend the parent classroom volunteer program be continued as a regular part of the school program?	31	100	0	0	0	0
16. Would you be interested in further training to become a substitute teacher in our school?	17	55	9	29	5	16

APPENDIX U

RESULTS OF

STAFF EVALUATION OF PARENT PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

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	YES	%	NO	%	SOMETIMES	N/A
1. Has the Parent Participation Program been of value to the school?	9	69	1	8	2	1
the parents?	11	85	0	0	2	0
the children?	5	38	4	31	3	1
the staff?	5	38	5	38	3	0
2. Do you feel the Parent Participation Program offers enough different opportunities for parents to become involved in throughout the year? (If you answered no - please list additional activities you feel should be offered at the end of this survey under question 9).	13	100	0	0	0	0
3. Did the classroom volunteer program prove beneficial to your class?	7	54	3	23	3	0
4. Do you consider the parent volunteers as part of the teaching team effort in your classroom?	5	38	6	46	2	0
5. Did you receive adequate assistance from the parents who signed up for the classroom support activities? (Ex: snow chain)	13	100	0	0	0	0
6. Were parent volunteers assigned to your classroom adequately trained? (If you answered no - please list additional training needed under question 12).	9	69	1	8	1	2
7. Do you want the parent classroom volunteers program to continue?	7	54	0	0	6	0
8. Do you consider the overall Parent Participation Program a success?	8	62	1	8	4	0
9. Would you recommend training interested parent volunteers to be substitute teachers?	8	62	1	8	4	0

10. Please list additional year round activities you feel the Parent Participation Program should undertake.

11. What other activities <u>in the classroom</u> do you feel should be offered to parents?

12. What additional activities would you recommend be offered to classroom support activities?

3. What additional training would you recommend for the Parent Classroom Volunteers?

4. In what ways were parent volunteers most helpful?